

MISSOURI CONSERVATIONIST

VOLUME 86, ISSUE 6, JUNE 2025
SERVING NATURE & YOU



KEEP WILD ANIMALS WILD



City or countryside, Missouri's wild animals are your neighbors, and finding a young animal alone doesn't mean it needs help. In spring and early summer, deer and other wild animals are sometimes left alone for long periods while their parents look for food. If you see young wildlife in the outdoors, don't assume it is abandoned or hurt.

LEAVE YOUNG WILDLIFE ALONE.

If you believe an animal is in distress,
notify the closest Missouri Department of Conservation office.

MissouriConservation.gov



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MISSOURI CONSERVATIONIST



ON THE COVER

Chicken of the woods mushroom (*Laetiporus sulphureus*)

DAVID STONNER

16–35mm lens, f/8
1/40 sec, ISO 800

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Letters to the Editor

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COOL TURTLE

Your March issue with the three-toed box turtle on the cover by Noppadol Paothong was outstanding. What a talent! I have enjoyed his work over a period of years. We are fortunate to have him.

Al Williams
Herculaneum

VIOLETS AND MOSSES

Kudos on a state-of-the-art publication! I enjoy reading it, cover to cover, each month. I especially loved reading the March 2025 issue, with Malissa Briggler's informative article, *Violets of Missouri* [Page 16]. Who knew there were so many varieties of this little wildflower?

The pictorial article, *Nature Comes Alive*, [Page 22] was stunning, with the always amazing photography from Noppadol Paothong and David Stonner. And even the picture in the article on the Corkwood Conservation Area [Page 30] is noteworthy because redbud season is my favorite drive-around season in Missouri. Our native redbuds are so plentiful, whether you are a city dweller, live in a suburban neighborhood, or along a county road.

Thanks for this excellent magazine and for the *Xplor* magazine, also. Your staff provides a wonderful benefit to all ages of Missourians.

Ardyce Nordeen Independence

I enjoyed your March article on violets and your April article on mosses [*Marvelous Mosses*; Page 22]. I always like reading about the small native plants, mosses, and fungi of Missouri that go largely unnoticed. I thought the moss article was particularly interesting and I'm excited to learn more about mosses and lichens.



I always enjoy my *Missouri Conservationist* magazine, but March and April stand out as excellent editions in an already great magazine.

Mary Tanck Pleasant Hill

BEAUTIFUL BUTTERFLY

Thanks for featuring the falcate orangetip on your *Wild Guide* page in April [Page 32]. We first discovered this butterfly five years ago in a state park across the state line in Kansas. Now it has become our annual trek to any place we can find it. We discovered that it has a very short flight in the spring, and then it's gone for the rest of the year.

Barry Jones Harrisonville

CLASSROOM COMPANION

As a retired Missouri Rockwood School District life science teacher, the April issue is the best teacher/student life science edition I have ever seen. I offered extra credit to my students who either received or signed up for the free magazine. I used it as a supplement to topics we covered in class. This edition covered trees, mosses, liverworts, etc. Great help to teachers and students. Thanks for a great educational magazine.

Paul Mallory Ballwin

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Send a note using our online contact form at mdc.mo.gov/commissioners.

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The Missouri Department of Conservation protects and manages the fish, forest, and wildlife of the state. We facilitate and provide opportunity for all citizens to use, enjoy, and learn about these resources.



Want to see your photos in the *Missouri Conservationist*?

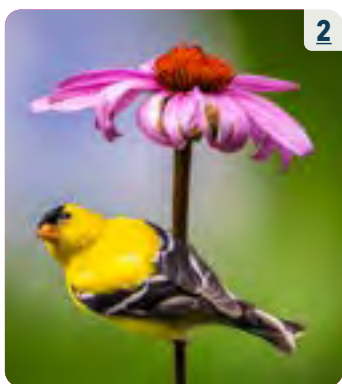
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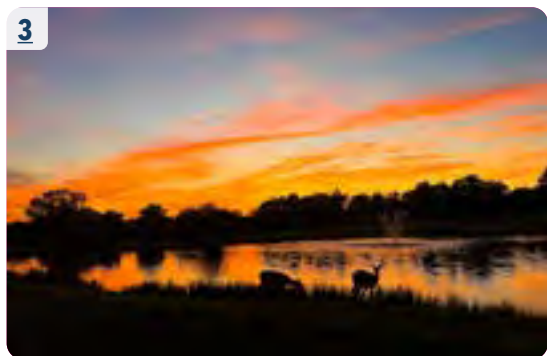
1 | Hercules
beetle by **Jamie
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2 | American
goldfinch
on a purple
coneflower by
Mark Putman, via
Flickr



2

3 | Deer at
golden hour
by **Laura Ann
Youngblood**, via
web submission



3



Want another chance to see your photos in the magazine?

➔ In the December issue, we plan to feature even more great reader photos. Use the submission methods above to send us your best year-round pictures of native Missouri wildlife, flora, natural scenery, and friends and family engaged in outdoor activities. Please include where the photo was taken and what it depicts.



Up Front

✖ As the spring nights have gotten longer, I find myself enjoying the cool evenings on my back porch, nested in the woods above the Missouri River. I've been joined by the persistent calls of a chuck-will's-widow, a sound — along with the calls of whip-poor-wills — that defines summer nights across the Missouri Ozarks and wooded areas of the state. There is something truly timeless about this distinct sound that takes me back to summer camping trips as a kid or evenings around the campfire with old friends. One member of this story is noticeably missing — the fireflies. Like many insects across the state, this once iconic animal is in steep decline.

Chuck-will's-widows and whip-poor-wills are ground nesting birds, which feed primarily on moths and other flying insects. Their populations are declining presumably because of lower insect abundance, habitat loss, and maturing of our Missouri forest. They prefer open woodland habitats that produce a greater abundance of insects and provide adequate nesting cover. The habitat conditions for these species are like those of another iconic Missouri species — the wild turkey. MDC is currently partnering with researchers and land managers at the University of Missouri, U.S. Forest Service Northern Research Station, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to better understand factors driving declines in these understudied species. The lessons learned will inform managers on how best to actively manage our forest and woodlands and use prescribed fire and other tools to improve forest and woodland habitats for these ground nesting birds that define the Missouri outdoors.

JASON SUMMERS, DIRECTOR
JASON.SUMMERS@MDC.MO.GOV

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SPECIES OF CONSERVATION CONCERN

Hope for the Ozark Chinquapin

Scientists lay groundwork for conserving a blight-stricken tree species

by Dianne Van Dien

✳️ **Until the 1960s, Ozark chinquapin trees grew up to 50 feet tall.** They stood alongside oaks and hickories in the Ozarks of Missouri and Arkansas, providing nuts to both wildlife and humans. But the blight that devastated their eastern relative, the American chestnut, eventually found its way to the Ozarks. Caused by a fungus, chestnut blight infects the tree and, over time, kills everything but the roots.

“The pathogen can’t enter the root systems,” explains Ron Revord, Ph.D., of the Center for Agroforestry at the University of Missouri (MU). “It causes trunk dieback, but new shoots can grow from the root collar.”

Today, most chinquapins only reach a shrubby state and are in a cycle of shoot regrowth and dieback.

Three species of chinquapin live in the southeastern U.S. All were hit by the blight. To conserve the Ozark chinquapin, MDC and MU are partnering on a long-term project that begins with looking at the chinquapins’ genetics.



The Ozark chinquapin (*Castanea ozarkensis*) is one of three chinquapin species found in the southeastern U.S. Related to the American chestnut, all have been hit hard by chestnut blight.



“We weren’t sure how distinct the three chinquapins are from each other because their native ranges either overlap or butt up against each other,” says Revord.

So, in collaboration with The American Chestnut Foundation and two other universities, leaf-tissue samples were collected for a population genetics study. The results support considering the Ozark chinquapin as a distinct species.

“And we want to conserve them because they are unique to the Ozarks,” says MDC Forest Entomologist Robbie Doerhoff.

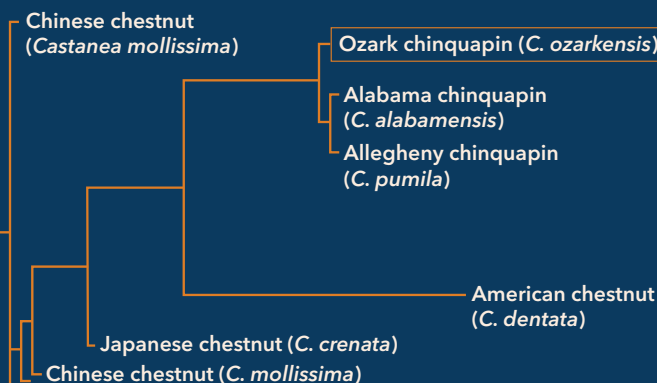
More detailed work is now underway to determine the genetic diversity within the Ozark chinquapins sampled. Biologists will then go back and collect the best specimens to grow for conservation on an MU research farm. These trees will also be tested for tolerance to blight.

“Resistance occurs on a spectrum,” says Doerhoff. “To produce trees that are blight tolerant and suitable for restoration, we need to have trees with varied genetics.”

It’s going to be a long process, says Revord, but “at some point we would look to make blight-tolerant trees available for planting at conservation areas and private lands in the Ozarks.”

At a Glance

This phylogenetic tree shows how Ozark chinquapin and two other chinquapin species are related to each other and share a common ancestor with the American chestnut. All four of these American species share a distant ancestry with the Japanese and Chinese chestnut.



Ozark chinquapin bark damaged by the fungus that causes chestnut blight.

Partners:

The American Chestnut Foundation, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Virginia Tech

In Brief

News and updates from MDC



FREE FISHING DAYS

GET HOOKED
ON FISHING
JUNE 7 AND 8

➔ Missouri is a great place to fish, and MDC invites everyone to experience it during Free Fishing Days, June 7 and 8. Anyone may fish in the Show-Me State during this time without purchasing a fishing permit, trout permit, or trout park daily tag. This is an annual MDC event that takes place statewide on the Saturday and Sunday following the first Monday in June.

All other fishing regulations remain in effect during Free Fishing Days, such as limits on size and number of fish an angler may keep. Special permits may still be required at some county, city, or private fishing areas. Trespass laws remain in effect on private property.

For information on Missouri fishing regulations, fish identification, and more, get a copy of the *2025 Summary of Missouri Fishing Regulations*, available where permits are sold or online at short.mdc.mo.gov/4gy.

MDC's free MO Fishing app can help anglers find the best places to fish in Missouri, access regulation information, identify fish by species, and more. Anglers can also store and show fishing permits right on their mobile devices. MO Fishing is available for download through Google Play for Android devices or the App Store for Apple devices. Learn more at short.mdc.mo.gov/ZJZ.



MO Fishing lets you view permits, find great places to fish, and ID your catch.

Get it for Android or iPhone platforms at short.mdc.mo.gov/Zi2

WANT TO LEARN TO FISH?

MDC's Discover Nature — Fishing provides a series of free lessons throughout the state. All fishing gear is provided. Learn more at mdc.mo.gov/dnf.

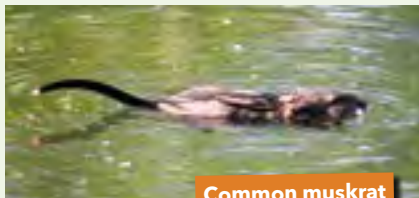
NEED FISHING GEAR?

MDC works with numerous libraries and other locations around the state to loan fishing gear for free. Loaner gear includes fishing poles and simple tackle box with hooks, sinkers, and bobbers. Worms, minnows, or other bait are not provided. Find MDC Rod and Reel Loaner Program locations at short.mdc.mo.gov/ZVc.

Ask MDC

Got a Question for Ask MDC?

Send it to AskMDC@mdc.mo.gov
or call 573-522-4115, ext. 3848.



Common muskrat

Q: We see muskrats regularly in the Blue Heron Trail pond at Onondaga Cave State Park. I was surprised to see this one constantly raise its tail as it swam. Can you tell me more about how muskrats move through water?

➔ A muskrat swimming on the surface holds its front feet against the chin while the hind feet alternately stroke the water in a vertical plane. On each return stroke, the hind feet are folded to reduce resistance to the water. Although the tail is trailed in a wavy or straight line and not used in surface swimming, it may act as a rudder in turning. They can swim backward as well as forward. They also use their tail vigorously

when swimming underwater. Because of air trapped in their fur, they are buoyant. For more information about Missouri's common muskrats, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/4CM.

Q: This ant hill was 3 feet tall, and there were several other ones. What ant species made these mounds?

➔ The Allegheny mound ant (*Formica exsectoides*) is the only Missouri ant species that builds such a large and neat earthen dome, said entomologist James Trager, who is a retired restoration biologist with the Shaw Nature Reserve and currently working with The Ants of Missouri Project.

"Few ant species — especially on a global scale — can be identified solely from a photo of the nest without images of the ants themselves," Trager said.

Normally to accurately identify an ant species, the observer must bravely ease into the nest's vicinity



Allegheny mound ant hill

to obtain photos of the inhabitants. For Allegheny mound ants, caution is advised — they can be aggressive when a nest is disturbed.

Trager noted these ants are considered temporary social parasites. According to Antwiki, newly mated queens can start new colonies by infiltrating the nest of two related species (*F. subsericea* and *F. fusca*). Once inside the host nest, the Allegheny queen will kill the host queen. Initially, the brood will be raised by the host workers. The host ants die off over time, leaving only the Allegheny mound ants, which by then have completely taken over the colony and nest maintenance tasks.

As more Allegheny queens are added, one mound can become several by "budding," which explains

Three-toed box turtle



GIVE TURTLES A BRAKE

Be cautious on the roads this spring and give turtles a brake. These reptiles are often hit by cars during the warmer months but are at special risk this time of year because they are more active. Common turtles crossing Missouri roads include three-toed box turtles, ornate box turtles, and snapping turtles.

Being struck by vehicles is a leading threat to box turtles in Missouri, so be cautious and slow down if you see a turtle in the road. If helping a turtle make it safely across, check for traffic and always move the turtle in the direction it is traveling.

Additionally, MDC urges the public to leave turtles in the wild. Taking wildlife, regardless of species, and keeping it as a pet normally ends in a slow death for the animal. Leave turtles in the wild, follow the speed limit, and keep your eyes on the road.

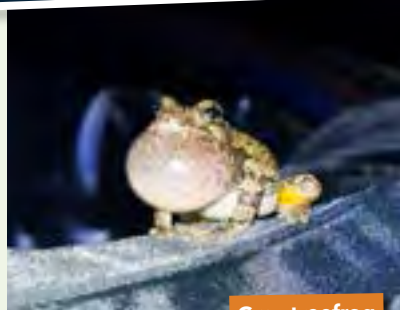
the other nests that were seen. This ant is essentially a prairie, open savanna, or woodland-prairie edge species.

Established colonies can grow to be very large and consist of an extensive collection of interconnected, large nest-mounds with many queens. Colonies may persist for many decades and encompass a large territory.

To learn more about these ants, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/4CA.

Q: Could you help me identify this frog?

➔ This is a gray treefrog. In Missouri, these frogs are normally active from late March through October. They breed from early April to early July, but sometimes into August. When the nighttime air temperature warms to 60 degrees, males gather and call at breeding sites. Preferred sites include temporary wetlands, flooded field edges and ditches, and fishless permanent ponds such as sloughs, woodland ponds, and swamps. Calling males may



Gray treefrog

sit at the water's edge or station themselves on a plant, log, or branch above the water.

Females produce 900-3,000 or more eggs, which hatch in four or five days. The tadpoles turn into froglets in about 1½-2 months. Newly transformed gray treefrog froglets are usually bright green. During the breeding season, females usually appear heavier bodied, while males have dark throats.

That white patch beneath the eye is an identifying characteristic of this species.

Gray treefrogs overwinter below ground. Like some other frogs, they produce a substance in their blood that functions as antifreeze. People often notice them overwintering in outdoor potted plants.

For more information, visit short.mdc.mo.gov/4CP.



Corporal Kevin Zielke

GREENE COUNTY
CONSERVATION AGENT

offers this month's

AGENT ADVICE

In today's hectic world, the demands on our time and attention can be overwhelming. That's why it is more important than ever to take time out to enjoy nature. There are so many activities to pursue in our great outdoors from hunting and foraging, kayaking and fishing, to birdwatching and outdoor photography. Why not take someone along for the adventure? There are people who would love to experience the outdoors but just need someone to show them the way. Be a mentor! Passing on your skills and knowledge is priceless and instills in others the importance of conserving and preserving our natural resources. Remember, time spent with others in the outdoors is always time well spent.

What IS it?

Can you
guess this
month's
natural
wonder?

*The answer is on
Page 9.*



INVASIVE
SPECIES

MISSOURI'S LEAST WANTED

Invasive nonnative species destroy habitat and compete with native plants and animals. Please do what you can to control invasive species when you landscape, farm, hunt, fish, camp, or explore nature.



Stiltgrass reduces habitat quality by replacing native plants with a dense carpet of undesirable forage.

Japanese Stiltgrass

by Angela Sokolowski and Susan Farrington

Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) is an invasive annual grass that grows 1–3 feet tall, sprawling in dense mats. Leaves are 1–3 inches long, lance shaped, with a distinct silver stripe of tiny hairs down the center. It germinates in spring, goes to seed early to late fall, and then dies back.

Why It's Bad

Stiltgrass invades a variety of habitats, creating dense mats that replace other plants over a short period, which disrupt soil nutrient cycling and impact tree health. Deer avoid eating it, and it displaces higher-quality resources for other wildlife. Dried thatch increases fire danger.

How to Control It

Perform all control methods before the plants go to seed.

Mechanical: Small patches can be hand pulled, as this annual has weak, shallow roots. On larger areas, use a weed whip to cut to ground-level, which inhibits resprouting. Mowing can prevent seed production, but higher cuts allow regrowth and require repeated treatments. Equipment easily transports seeds, so clean off all debris on site.

Chemical: Spray late August to mid-September using non-selective herbicides with glyphosate. Always read and follow the herbicide label.



The leaves have an off-centered silvery stripe that resembles a snail's trail.



WHAT IS IT?

LICHEN GRASSHOPPER

The lichen grasshopper sticks to sunny, rocky areas, such as the rocky glades and hilltops in the Ozarks, where its mottled and speckled pattern keeps it perfectly camouflaged. Within the species, color patterns may vary depending on the color of the rocks in a particular area. Individuals may be greenish, tan, brown, gray, yellowish, or slightly rusty. Lichen grasshoppers appear in late spring or early summer and remain until the first hard freeze.

MAKE A SPLASH DURING FROGGING SEASON

Discover nature this summer during frogging season. Beginning June 30 at sunset through Oct. 31, those with a fishing permit or small-game hunting permit may harvest bullfrogs and green frogs. Learn more at mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/species/frog.

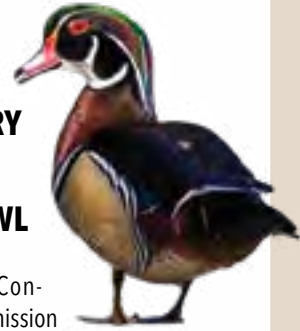
The fun does not have to end after catching frogs. Tasty recipes can be found online at short.mdc.mo.gov/Zxz.

Buy Missouri hunting and fishing permits from numerous vendors around the state or online at mdc.mo.gov/buypermits. Once purchased, permits may be carried electronically through MDC's free mobile apps, MO Hunting and MO Fishing, available for download through Google Play or the App Store.



MIGRATORY GAME BIRD AND WATERFOWL SEASONS

The Missouri Conservation Commission approved recommendations at its April meeting for the upcoming 2025 migratory game bird hunting seasons and 2025–2026 waterfowl hunting seasons.



✕ 2025 Migratory Game Bird Hunting

Mourning Doves, Eurasian Collared Doves, and White-Winged Doves

Season: Sept. 1–Nov. 29

Limits: 15 daily and 45 in possession combined total for all three species

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Sora and Virginia Rails

Season: Sept. 1–Nov. 9

Limits: 25 daily and 75 in possession combined for both species

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Wilson's (Common) Snipe

Season: Sept. 1–Dec. 16

Limits: 8 daily and 24 in possession

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

American Woodcock

Season: Oct. 18–Dec. 1

Limits: 3 daily and 9 in possession

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Coots

Season: Same as duck season dates in the respective zones (See dates under Waterfowl Hunting for Ducks)

Limits: 15 daily and 45 in possession

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

✱ 2025–2026 Waterfowl Hunting

Teal

Season: Sept. 13–21

Limits: 6 daily and 18 in possession

Hours: Sunrise to sunset

Ducks

Season:

- North Zone: Nov. 1–Dec. 30
- Middle Zone: Nov. 1–9, 2025 and Nov. 15, 2025–Jan. 4, 2026
- South Zone: Nov. 27–30 and Dec. 7, 2025–Jan. 31, 2026

Bag Limit: 6 ducks daily with species restrictions of:

- 4 mallards (no more than 2 hens)
- 3 pintails
- 3 wood ducks
- 2 black ducks
- 2 canvasbacks
- 2 hooded mergansers
- 2 redheads
- 2 scaup for first 45 days and 1 scaup for last 15 days
- 1 mottled duck

Possession Limit: Three times the daily bag or 18 total, varies by species

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Snow Geese (White and Blue Phases) and Ross's Geese

Season: Nov. 11, 2025–Feb. 6, 2026

Limits: 20 blue, snow, or Ross's geese daily with no possession limit

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

White-Fronted Geese

Season: Nov. 11, 2025–Feb. 6, 2026

Limits: 2 daily and 6 in possession

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Canada Geese and Brant

Season: Oct. 4–12 and Nov. 11, 2025–Feb. 6, 2026

Limits: 3 Canada geese and brant in aggregate daily, 9 in possession

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Light Goose Conservation Order

Season: Feb. 7–April 30, 2026

Limits: No daily or possession limits

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset

Methods: For the taking of blue, snow, and Ross's geese, hunters may use shotguns capable of holding more than three shells and recorded or electronically amplified bird calls or sounds or imitations of bird calls or sounds.

✱ 2025 Youth Hunting Days

North Zone: Oct. 25–26

Middle Zone: Oct. 25–26

South Zone: Nov. 22–23

Limits: Same as during regular waterfowl season

Hours: Same as during regular waterfowl season

Requirements: Any person 15 or younger may participate in youth waterfowl hunting days without a permit provided they are in the immediate presence of an adult 18 or older. If the youth hunter is not certified in hunter education, the adult must have the required permits and have in his or her possession proof of hunter education, unless exempt. The adult may not hunt ducks but may participate in other seasons that are open on youth hunting days.

✱ 2025–2026 Falconry Seasons

Falconry Season for Doves

Season: Sept. 1–Dec. 16

Limits: 3 daily and 9 in possession, singly or in the aggregate (any ducks, coots, or mergansers taken by falconers must be included in these limits)

Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Falconry Season for Ducks, Coots, and Mergansers

Season: Open statewide during early teal season, in each zone during duck season (including youth days), and statewide Feb. 11–March 10, 2026.

Limits: 3 daily and 9 in possession, singly or in the aggregate during the regular duck hunting seasons (including teal and youth seasons) and extended falconry seasons (any doves taken by falconers must be included in these limits)

Hours: Sunrise to sunset during the September teal season, one-half hour before sunrise to sunset during the remaining seasons

Hunting Zones

Waterfowl hunting in Missouri is divided into three zones: North, Middle, and South. For a map and more information, visit MDC online at short.mdc.mo.gov/49R or refer to MDC's *2025-2026 Migratory Bird and Waterfowl Hunting Digest*, available beginning in July where hunting permits are sold.

Nontoxic Shot Requirements

Shells possessed or used while hunting waterfowl and coots statewide, and for other species as designated by posting on public areas, must be loaded with material approved as nontoxic by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Get more information on nontoxic-shot requirements, allowed types, and conservation areas requiring use at short.mdc.mo.gov/Z9b.

Change to Federal Duck Stamp

Per the Federal Duck Stamp Modernization Act of 2023, the Federal Duck Stamp has been converted to a digital version and hunters are no longer required to carry a paper copy. Hunters must have a digital version in their possession.

For more information on migratory bird and waterfowl hunting, visit MDC online at short.mdc.mo.gov/4J9, or get MDC's *Migratory Bird and Waterfowl Hunting Digest 2025-2026*, available in July, online and where hunting permits are sold.



FOCUSED

on the Moment

FISHING OFFERS A 'HAPPY PLACE'
FOR NEURODIVERGENT ANGLER

by John Smelcer with Mark Stone

photographs by David Stonner

I've been a fisherman all my life. I grew up in Alaska, one of the most popular sports fishing destinations in the world. As an Alaskan, I took every opportunity to go fishing — on land and on sea. I love to fish. As the old saying goes, "A bad day at fishing is better than a good day at work."

For over half a century, I had many fishing partners, young and old. I remember one partner back in the late 1970s. He was 92 years old. I was a teenager. I'm a little embarrassed to admit that he out-fished me all day long. He never tired. He was a lean, mean fishing machine. We spent the entire day standing knee-deep in the Goodpaster River catching grayling on fly rods. We must have caught a hundred fish between us.

"Number 37!" the old man shouted as he reeled in a hooked fish. "35!" I yelled back above the din of the rapids. Although I can no longer remember his name, I can still see him standing there, his worn fishing hat full of flies, smoking a cigar with a grin on his face.

But for over a decade now, I've lived in northeast Missouri. Nowadays, my fishing buddy is the son of a good friend. His name is Mark. At 40, he's young enough to be my son. It's a wonderful intergenerational friendship. I've never had a buddy like him. He loves fishing even more than I do. He's a walking encyclopedia of fishing knowledge. We go fishing in every season, including ice fishing in winter.

But one thing sets him apart from the others — Mark has autism, which is a form of neurodivergence. At its simplest definition, that means his brain is wired differently. I've learned a lot from fishing with my friend. His enthusiasm for fishing has rekindled my own enthusiasm, brought me back to the sport.

On the Spectrum

When I was a boy fishing in Alaska, folks didn't talk about autism much, if at all. A decade or so ago, only one in 11,000 children was diagnosed with autism. Today, that number is around one in 100. Chances are you know someone with autism. In my own small circle of friends, I know of at least three other people. At its simplest definition autism spectrum

disorder (ASD) affects the nervous system. The range and severity of characteristics can vary widely. Common characteristics include difficulty with communication, difficulty with social interactions, obsessive interests, and repetitive behaviors. Early recognition, as well as behavioral, educational, and family therapies, provide the support needed for development and learning. Autism is a spectrum, from low to high support needs.

I don't know where my fishing buddy is on the spectrum, but I know that he exhibits many of the behaviors.

Fishing With My Friend

A year ago, we decided to go to a nearby lake that was known to have muskies, Mark's favorite sports fish. We agreed that I would pick him up at a certain time. I texted him before I left the house, reminding him to be ready to go. When I got to his place, he wasn't near ready. He was sitting in a room overflowing with fishing lures. Every inch of the room was packed. There were so many lures that he could open a tackle shop. I spent an hour just waiting for him to meticulously look through every hook he owned, deciding which ones to take.

Finally, we loaded up the five rods and the three or four enormous tackle boxes he brought, a net, and a backpack. There was no room for him to move in his boat. I took one rod and one small tackle box. I probably had four extra lures, just in case I lost some. After all, we only planned to fish for a few hours that afternoon. He brought enough tackle for a year.

Even after launching his boat, Mark spent more time looking through his boxes of tackle than he did wetting his line. I've since learned that this is commonplace, part of the obsessiveness. Almost every time we go fishing, I've made a hundred casts and caught a few fish while he rummaged through every lure he brought, deciding which one to use. I swear he tries to use every hook for at least one cast. I sometimes joke that Mark goes fishing for lures, not for fish. But after fishing with him a dozen times, I've learned that is what makes Mark happy, even if he's not actually fishing for much of the time.



As the old saying goes, "A bad day at fishing is better than a good day at work."





Mark's boat was so crammed with gear and poles that he set his cell phone down on the heap and it slid off into the lake. Without it, he couldn't call me, answer my calls, nor could he tell what time it was. Consequently, he arrived at the dock hours late, dehydrated and sunburned so badly he went to urgent care later that day. After the experience, I bought Mark one of those floating cell phone holders so he wouldn't lose the replacement phone. I've also learned that time has a different meaning for Mark. Setting a time with him is more suggestion than obligation.

Diagnosis

"Technically, I've been diagnosed with both ADHD and ASD," Mark said. "I was first diagnosed with ADHD at 22 and autism at 29. Both are considered 'neurodivergent,' and science is increasingly recognizing they're on the same spectrum."

ADHD, autism, and AuDHD (short-hand for dual diagnosis) all present differently. For example, those with ADHD are notorious for poor time management. People with ASD are known for being much more regimented. Historically, the ADHD diagnostic model heavily favored middle-upper class children. Other children often got stuck with labels that are highly stigmatizing at worst, like conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, or personality disorders, and at best, diagnoses that are simply wrong, like bipolar disorder, depression, social anxiety, OCD, among others.

Add in cultural and socioeconomic status factors and it gets even messier.

For Mark, it wasn't really until high school that teachers noticed something different about him. He was a good student, which Mark credits to his excessive reading. He was also good at math, which didn't hurt. Mark says that giving someone a label, even "autistic," can be stigmatizing.

Being autistic doesn't mean one can't succeed.

Mark is married. And, despite the diagnosis and frequent and debilitating

migraines, Mark earned a degree in sociology from the University of Missouri in Columbia. He admits the years there were a struggle for him, but he managed to earn his degree. Nowadays, he thinks about earning a master's degree in fisheries, biology, or some field related to land and resources management.

Fishing — The Great Equalizer

I share this story about my friend only to show how much I've learned to appreciate and to accept him for who he is — my fishing buddy. Despite some apprehension, he was brave to contribute to this story.

He and his father recall that even as a boy, Mark was totally into fishing. Over the years, he's gone fishing with his grandfather, father, and his uncles. His mother sometimes tags along for the boat ride or joins him in her kayak.

No matter how many fish we do or don't catch, he's absolutely content to be fishing. He's 100 percent focused on the moment. Nothing else matters. He's in his zone, his happy place.

They say it's good for the spirit to spend some time in nature. Mark's story proves the adage right. Missourians are fortunate to live in a state with a lot of public resources including parks, conservation areas, campgrounds, stocked ponds and lakes, managed waterways, and even well-maintained shooting ranges. There are so many places where residents can go fishing, hiking, birdwatching, hunting, canoeing or kayaking, camping, or even mountain biking. I go camping sometimes just to be in nature. Sitting around a campfire without modern distractions is good medicine. The same holds for fishing.

No matter how much we differ, Missouri's public lands are for everyone. For Mark and me, we are always on the lookout for a new place to go fishing. ▲

John Smelcer is a freelance writer, who has written articles for more than 500 magazines over the decades.

Young Mark & his Grandfather



Mark & Uncle Randy



The GIANT Muskie

Mark & Me



A photograph of a person walking away from the camera on a dirt path in a forest. The path is covered with fallen leaves. To the right of the path is a calm river or stream, reflecting the surrounding trees. The forest is dense with green foliage, and a large tree trunk is visible on the right side of the path. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

GOOD SHOES *and* CURIOSITY

SEARCHING FOR WILD FOODS CONNECTS FORAGERS WITH NATURE

by Gilbert Randolph
photographs by David Stonner



DO YOU WANT TO LEARN TO FORAGE?

Learning plant and mushroom identification doesn't take a biology degree, just a good pair of shoes and some curiosity.

WHY FORAGE?

The most obvious reason for foraging is food, much of which is simply unavailable in the grocery store. Many native plants lack the shelf stability or cultural value to make them marketable and have therefore not yet made their way into the world of agriculture. Foraging for wild foods gives you access to a palate of flavors and textures that will elevate your cooking.

Learning to forage helps hunters identify food sources other than acorns and ag fields. Being able to identify persimmon trees year-round or the leafy browse that deer eat in areas that aren't next to farmland will get you closer to deer and increase your odds of hunting success. Learning plant identification will also help you recognize high-quality habitat versus low-quality habitat. For any type of hunting, habitat is the number one determining factor of success. If you want to find ducks or turkey or rabbits, you need to know what they eat, where they like to be, and what time of year they use different areas. If you find high-quality prairie, full of blackberries, foxtails, and the like, you'll find upland birds. If you find shaded pawpaw groves, you'll find early season whitetails. When you forage, you'll see more sign, learn more about animal behavior, and explore places you previously wouldn't have.

Foraging also reorients your value system. Most foragers get excited when seeing new, native plants, and foraging makes one much more aware of landscapes that have been drastically altered by invasive plants. It even gives people a whole new appreciation for the pokes of blackberry and gooseberry thorns and a love for the marshes and the riparian areas where they find morels, oyster mushrooms, and hen of the woods. Foraging connects you to wonder and appreciation and opens your eyes to the value of wild spaces.

Those are just a few reasons to forage. Where do you get started?

START SMALL

Being a well-rounded forager takes years of adventure and learning, but don't worry. No one is an expert when they start. For your first foraging hike, check out the Discover Nature section on mdc.mo.gov for a few tips on what is in season. Make a short list of a few plants or fungi you'd like to identify and hit the trail.

Location is everything when it comes to foraging, and the MDC online *Field Guide* can be a huge help in pointing you in the right direction. You can read about the habitat conditions certain plants and fungi prefer, their edibility status, even some of the history behind a plant's usage. Once you're in the field, let your curiosity lead you. Take pictures of plants you don't know from multiple angles so you can reference them later. Or take a small sample. For some plants, such as ginseng, you will need to know about harvest regulations, which can be found online at short.mdc.mo.gov/49V.

Also pay attention to when you are going foraging. You won't find morels in the summer, no matter how far you look. Every wild food has a season and knowing what's available based on the time of year is as important as being in the right location. Weather can also play a big role in your foraging success, especially for wild mushrooms. If you've had rain, it's likely that it will boost mushroom growth a few days afterward. Don't waste a good rainstorm.

THE APPS

The MDC *Field Guide* and Google images are good sources to cross-reference what you find. There is also a wide variety of mushroom and plant identification apps, from Seek to Shroomify. Although helpful, these apps can be wrong and are not a good substitute for learning to accurately identify wild edibles.

The apps do have value, however, and can often get you in the right ballpark so you can speed up your search. Some of the apps even have a citizen science component that allows you to catalog your observations of native plants so that biologists can map out native plant populations and abundance. Don't worry, though. You can turn off location services and keep your mushroom spots a secret!



Invasive plants, such as this beefsteak plant (also called wild basil or shiso), are great foraging targets since taking them off the landscape helps make space for native plants.





Indigo milky



Yellow morel



Chicken of the woods



Hen of the woods

START SIMPLE

Fungi can be tricky to ID, so it's best to start with mushrooms that have few or no toxic look-alikes in our state. Some of the easiest mushrooms to ID are indigo milky (*Lactarius indigo*), yellow morel (*Morchella esculentoides*), sulfur-colored chicken of the woods (*Laetiporus sulphureus*), and hen of the woods (*Grifola frondosa*).

Morels are best found in spring in sandy river bottoms with an abundance of cottonwood, sycamore, and ash trees. Indigo milky mushrooms are often found close to conifers in the hot, dog days of summer. Sulfur-colored chicken of the woods grows from summer to fall and only grows on dead trees. Hen of the woods grows in the fall around dying oak trees. There are few better ways to enjoy the changing of the seasons like finding this mushroom, which in Japan is referred to as maitake, or "dancing mushroom."

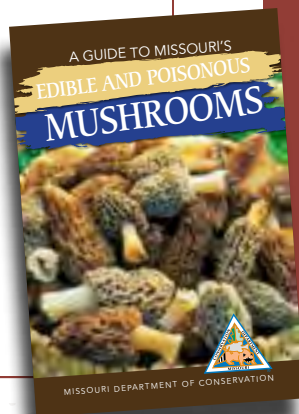
Some mushrooms you'll want to beware of are those in the Amanita family — the destroying angel — as some call it, and mushrooms that could be confused with deadly look-alikes. Another to be aware of is the deadly galerina or *Galerina marginata* (*G. autumnalis*). This mushroom and many others in the "little brown mushroom" or LBM category can be harmful or even deadly. Always be 100 percent sure of your identification before trying a wild mushroom and always start with a small amount so you can see how your body reacts. Some common edible mushrooms, such as chicken of the woods, cause upset stomachs in some people. There's no faster way to ruin a foraging experience than a visit to the bathroom.



In the world of plants, fruits and nuts can be a great place to start. Hickory nuts, black walnuts, and acorns are all easy to identify, and if you're a hunter, will help you home in on some prime areas of focus. Just know that most acorns, while edible, are very bitter and require "leeching" or successive soakings in hot water to remove the tannins that make them unpalatable for us.

In the world of berries and fruit, wild blackberries, mulberries, pawpaws, and persimmons are all very easy to identify and are widespread throughout the state. Keep an eye out for mulberries in early summer. You'll see the ground littered with ripe berries, and a bucket for shorter trees or a good shake is all you need to collect mulberries from taller trees. Blackberries love the heat and humidity of Missouri summers and are easily found along pole lines, alongside trails, and anywhere where the ground has been disturbed. Pawpaws come into ripeness around September, and their custardy, sweet flavor is often described as somewhere between a banana and a mango. Persimmons ripen as the first touches of frost come in the fall, making the end of October a favorite time to collect these. Make sure they are soft to the touch and come easily off the branch before eating them. While ripe persimmons are sweet and have a holiday spice flavor, unripe persimmons have a tannic pucker that you won't want to taste again.

To be safe, always be certain of your mushroom identification before consuming. For more information, consult *A Guide to Missouri's Edible and Poisonous Mushrooms* at short.mdc.mo.gov/ZNf.





Pawpaw groves can be found in riparian areas, and ripe fruit starts dropping in September. Pawpaws have a unique, custardy flavor that many compare to a cross between a banana and a mango.

A FEW RULES

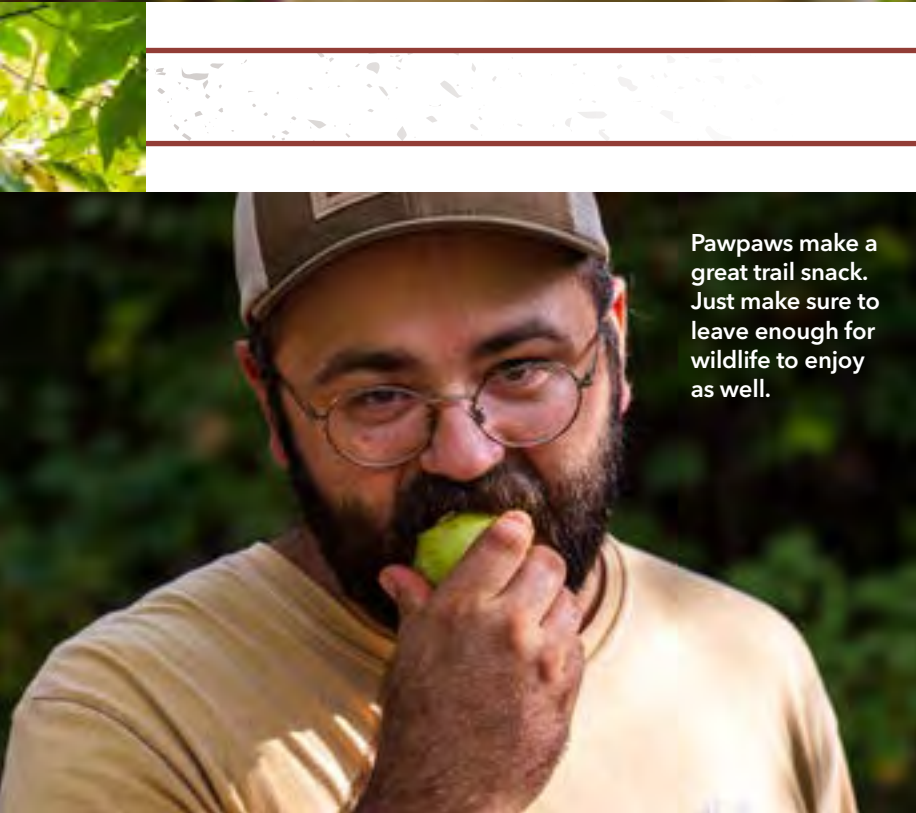
While foraging is highly rewarding, it's important to remember that wild plants are a limited resource and important for the health of wildlife. When foraging, leave most of a resource for wildlife. If you come on a persimmon tree loaded with fruit, consider only taking 10 to 20 percent of the fruit and leave 80–90 percent for wildlife. This is especially important for staple items that wildlife rely on, such as acorns.

You can also focus your foraging efforts on invasive plants, such as autumn olive or multiflora rose, both of which offer little nutrition for wildlife and outcompete more desirable native plants.

Be aware of the laws regarding foraging in the area you plan to visit. Taking wild edibles at MDC nature centers is prohibited, as is taking wild greens from natural areas. State parks also have limits on the amounts of berries, nuts, and mushrooms that can be collected. If you want more wild edibles than what can be ethically gathered at your local conservation area, MDC sells a variety of wild plants through the George O. White State Forest Nursery in Licking that you can plant on your own property. Creating your own foraged food garden with native Missouri plants is a great way to improve wildlife habitat on your property and add some variety to your pantry.

Always check the regulations for an area before foraging. It is illegal to sell wild mushrooms found on MDC areas. Wild edibles are best when they're consumed for your personal use and with friends and family. Also, it is imperative to be 100 percent sure of the identification of any wild plant or mushroom before consuming it. If in doubt, throw it out. ▲

Gilbert Randolph is a writer and an avid outdoorsman. When he's not creating stories in the digital space, he's exploring nature and sharing it with people.



Pawpaws make a great trail snack. Just make sure to leave enough for wildlife to enjoy as well.

lasting memories

SUMMER PHOTOS PUT NATURE'S
UNIQUE OFFERINGS ON DISPLAY

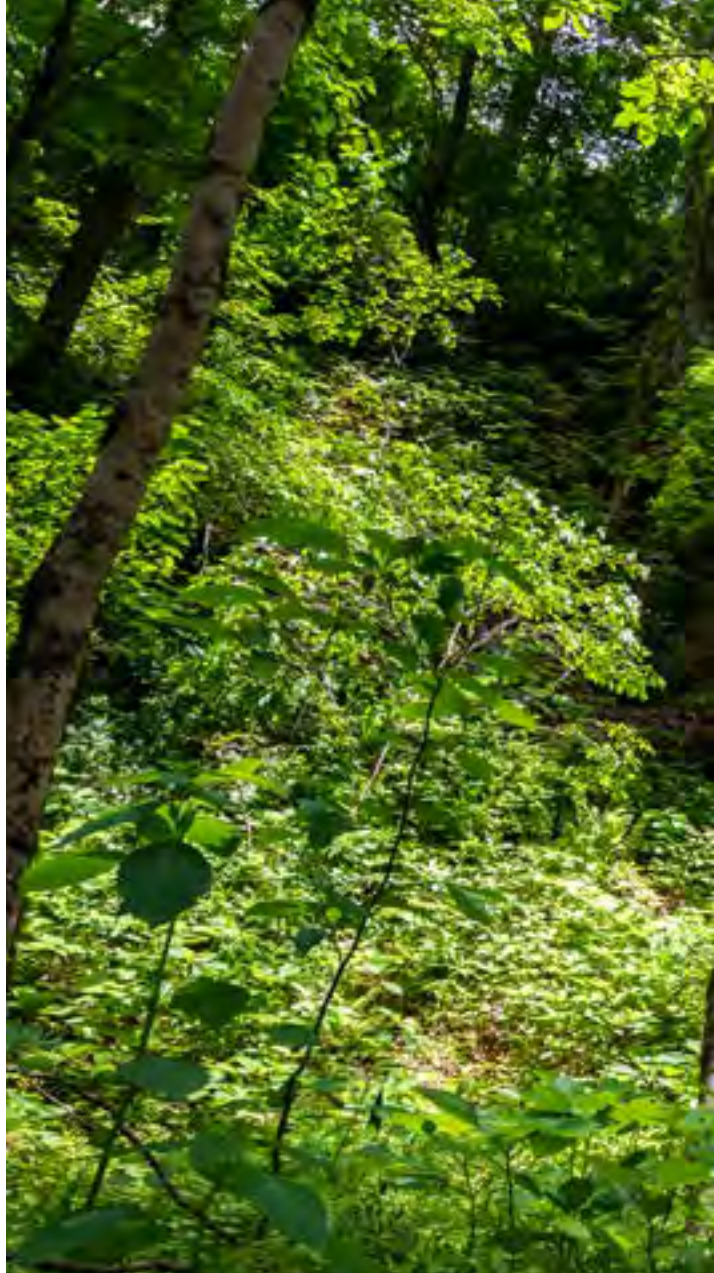
Summer is peak time for vacations. Whether you have a few days, weeks, or even months to relax from the stress of work, school, or just day-to-day life, summer is usually the time people head out, looking for a change of scenery.

You can find that solace right here in the Show-Me State. With more than 1,000 conservation areas, you don't need to travel far. Each area is unique, offering something for everyone, from fishing and traversing a myriad of waterways, hiking trails, or watching birds, butterflies, and bees as they flutter through colorful blooms.

The days are long and the options are endless. Get out and take it all in. What will you discover?

Vacations with family are a time
to create lasting memories, to
laugh and to simply be together.

— John Wooden



Blue Grosbeak

Noppadol Paothong

600mm lens • f/5.6

1/800 sec



Gray Treefrog

Noppadol Paothong

100mm lens • f/3.5 • 1/250 sec



Sunklands Conservation Area

David Stonner

35mm lens • f/8

1/320 sec



Swamp Metalmark

Noppadol Paothong

180mm lens • f/11 • 1/80 sec



Three-Toed Box Turtle

Noppadol Paothong

100mm lens • f/3.5

1/400 sec



Prairie Blazing Star

Noppadol Paothong

180mm lens • f/32

1/15 sec



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail Caterpillar

Noppadol Paothong

105mm lens • f/5.6

1/160 sec

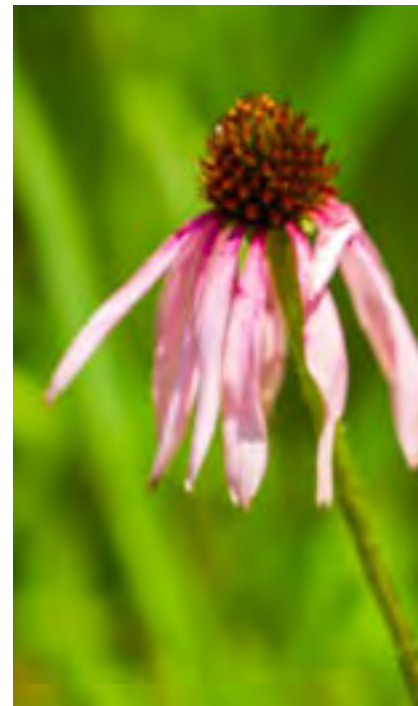


Eastern Tiger Swallowtail on Prairie Blazing Star

Noppadol Paothong

15mm lens • f/16

1/320 sec





Niawathe Prairie
Conservation Area

Noppadol Paothong
17-40mm lens • f/8 • 1/40 sec



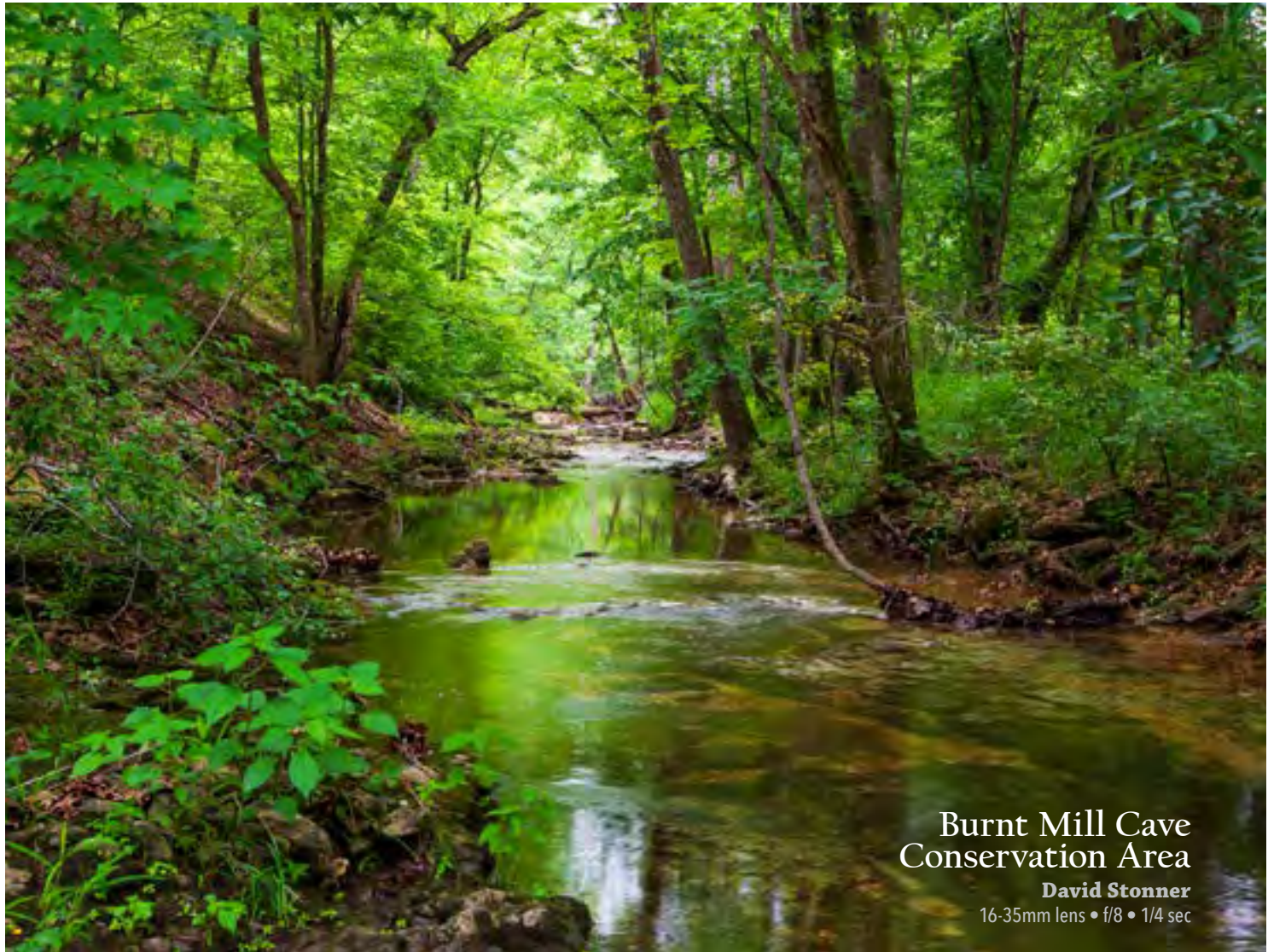
American Lady
and Monarch on
Glade Coneflowers

David Stonner
100-400mm lens • f/5.6 • 1/1000 sec



Monarch
Caterpillars
on Milkweed

Noppadol Paothong
15mm lens • f/11 • 1/125 sec



**Burnt Mill Cave
Conservation Area**

David Stonner

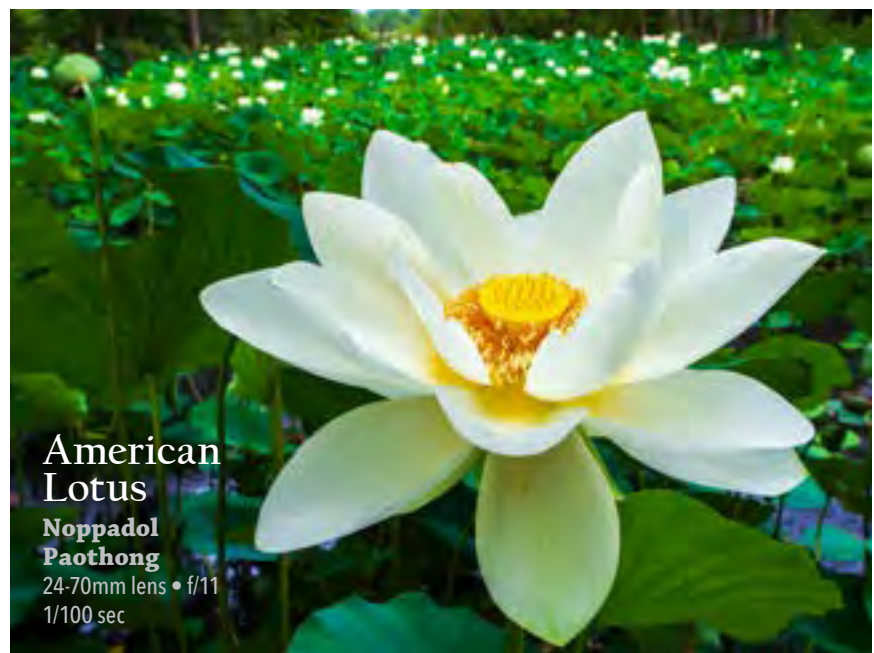
16-35mm lens • f/8 • 1/4 sec



**Summer
Tanager**

**Noppadol
Paothong**

600mm lens • f/6.3
1/320 sec



**American
Lotus**

**Noppadol
Paothong**

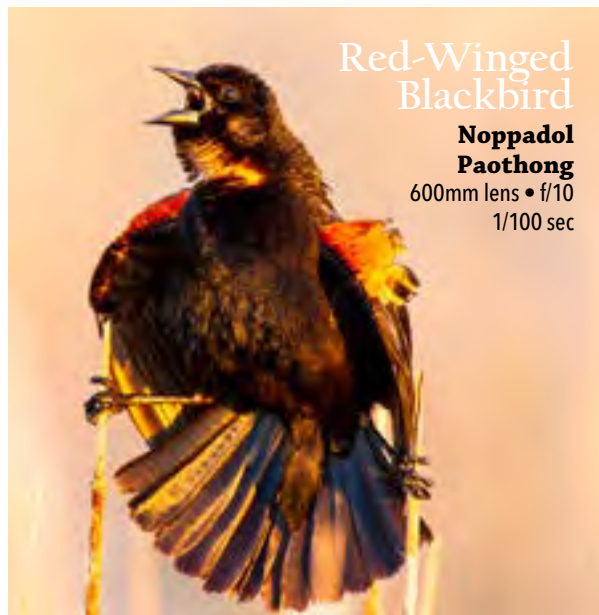
24-70mm lens • f/11
1/100 sec



Yellow-Crowned Night-Heron

David Stonner

100-500mm lens • f/7.1 • 1/400 sec



Red-Winged Blackbird

Noppadol Paothong

600mm lens • f/10
1/100 sec



Eastern Cottontail

David Stonner

100-400mm lens • f/5.6
1/320 sec



Young Bullhead Catfish

David Stonner

100-500mm lens • f/7.1 • 1/500 sec



Halloween Pennant

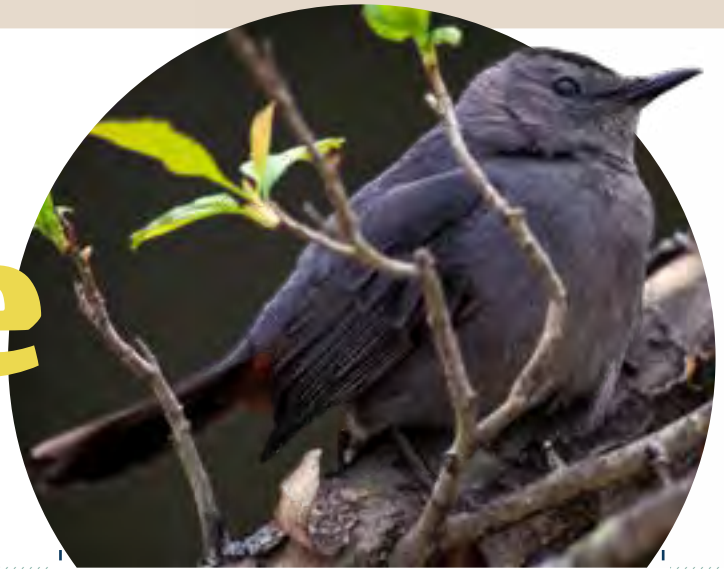
Noppadol Paothong

180mm lens • f/8 • 1/400 sec

Get Outside

in JUNE

→ Ways to connect with nature



Who's Calling?

Gray catbirds sing from dense foliage in trees and shrubs. Their song, which can go on nonstop for minutes at a time, may be confusing. Their tunes are cobbled together from a variety of sounds that they mimic. You may hear the tunes of cardinals, robins, wrens, frogs, or chickens. They can even sound like a cat, giving them their common name.

Feed Me

Bladderworts, Missouri's only carnivorous plants, are in bloom. They are branching, rootless, aquatic plants that tend to grow in thick, floating mats under the water. The leaves are threadlike and the flowers resemble tiny yellow snapdragons, held above the water. The baglike bladders that constitute the trap are only about the size of a pinhead, so the animals they trap are quite small and include tiny crustaceans, minute aquatic insects, mosquito larvae, and newly hatched tadpoles and fish fry.



Bladderwort

Blooms for Butterflies

Common milkweed grows along roadsides, thickets, and other open areas. Its pink to lilac blooms are a favorite of monarch butterflies, whose caterpillars eat the foliage, storing the milkweed's toxic sap. This is a defense mechanism, making the monarchs unpalatable to predators.

Butterfly weed, the state's only orange-flowered milkweed, blooms in native prairies and other sunny habitats. It is a magnet for butterflies, including coral hairstreak butterflies, which is only around through July. The coral hairstreak ignores all other plants in favor of butterfly weed.



Common milkweed



Butterfly weed

Mushroom Madness

Mushroom season doesn't begin and end with morels. **Chanterelles** are another choice edible popping up through August in the wilds of Missouri. There are three chanterelles to look for — smooth, golden, and cinnabar.

- **Smooth chanterelles** are bright orange to yellow with wavy margins and smooth undersides.
- **Golden chanterelles** are bright orange to yellow with wavy margins and forked ridges.
- **Cinnabar chanterelles** are reddish-orange and vase-shaped with forked ridges.



Smooth

Golden

Cinnabar

Natural Events to See This Month

Here's what's going on in the natural world.



Blanchard's cricket frogs breed.



Channel catfish spawn.



Furrow orbweavers build webs.

SOUTHEAST REGION

LEARN TO HUNT: Where and Why to Hunt

Saturday • June 28 • 9-11 a.m.

Online only

Registration required by June 27. To register call 888-283-0364 or visit short.mdc.mo.gov/49W.

All ages

Hunting is not only a family tradition, but a personal privilege that everyone can enjoy. Hunting is basic to our nature.

Hunting allows us to help control wildlife populations and fund projects for wildlife management. Hunting is also a safe and natural way to help each of us reconnect to nature and our surroundings. In this class, we will cover all the reasons to hunt, why it's important, and explore myths about hunting.

VIRTUAL HUNTING SERIES: Tree Stand Safety

Thursday • July 3 • 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Online only

Registration required by July 3. To register call 888-283-0364 or visit short.mdc.mo.gov/49s.

All ages

Tree stand accidents are one of the major causes of hunting related injuries. Find out steps that you can take to ensure your safety while hunting from, and setting up, a tree stand. Several examples of different tree stands will be mentioned in this class.

Horns for Hummingbirds

Look for hummingbirds hovering around the red-orange blooms of trumpet creeper. It's common in roadside thickets and crawls up the sides of cliffs. Hummingbirds enjoy these trumpet-shaped flowers.



Young woodchucks make their own burrows.

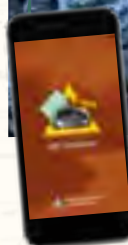


Fireflies flicker at dusk.



RECONNECT WITH NATURE

Adventure can happen anywhere. Download the free **MO Outdoors** app for great places to go and capture memories near you.



Available on the
App Store

GET IT ON
Google Play

Places to Go

SOUTHWEST REGION

Diamond Grove Prairie Conservation Area

A bouquet of blooms and birds
by Larry Archer

✕ Neckties traditionally beat out flowers for Father's Day, but if one wants to buck tradition, a trip with Pop to Diamond Grove Prairie Conservation Area (CA) provides bunches of blooms to view (but not pick).

Located on more than 850 acres in southwest Missouri's Newton County, Diamond Grove Prairie CA boasts a bouquet of wildflower blooms, said MDC Wildlife Biologist Warren Sharp.

"Between 500–600 acres of it is actually a designated natural area, so it's pretty high-quality prairie," Sharp said. "In June, a lot of the wildflowers all start popping up. Later in June and July it should be pretty well in full swing, with lots of good wildflowers to look at."

A consistent regimen of prescribed fire gives wildflowers a boost against grasses and invasives that might otherwise choke them out.

"They'll basically just lay there dormant and let the grass kind of take over," he said. "Whenever you get all the thatch burned off of it, that's when they have a chance to express themselves."

And if Dad is more into birds than blooms, Diamond Grove Prairie CA is also a magnet for those migrating bird species that seek out native grasslands, he said.



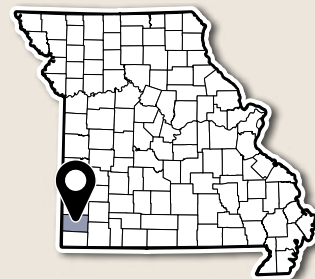
"It's fairly easy to walk. There are no routinely mowed trails, but this is one of the shorter prairies in the area, which makes viewing easier."

—MDC Wildlife Biologist
Warren Sharp

DAVID STONNER



Prairie grasses, wildflowers, and migratory grassland bird species can all be found in June on Diamond Grove Prairie CA. Common species include the dickcissel and the pale purple coneflower (inset).



DIAMOND GROVE PRAIRIE CONSERVATION AREA

consists of 852 acres in Newton County. From Diamond, take Route V west 4 miles, then Lark Road north 1.25 miles.

37.016, -94.389

short.mdc.mo.gov/49n 417-629-3434

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU VISIT



Birdwatching The eBird list of birds recorded at Diamond Grove Prairie CA is available at short.mdc.mo.gov/497.

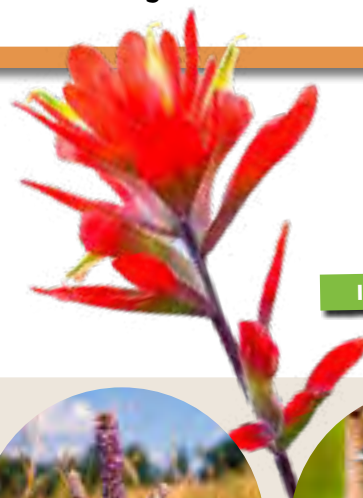
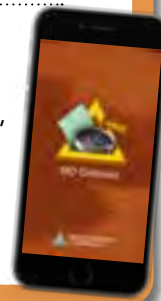


Hunting **Deer** and **turkey**
Regulations are subject to annual changes. Refer to MDC's regulation page online at short.mdc.mo.gov/Zjw.

Also **bear**, **quail**, and **rabbit**

DISCOVER MO OUTDOORS

Users can quickly and easily find outdoor activities close to home, work, or even while traveling with our free mobile app, MO Outdoors. Available in Android or iPhone platforms at mdc.mo.gov/mooutdoors.



Indian paintbrush

WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN YOU VISIT



Prairie blazing star



Scissor-tailed flycatcher



Lead plant



Indigo bunting



Eastern Snapping Turtle

Chelydra serpentina

Status
Common

Size
Adult upper shell: 8-14 inches, to nearly 20 inches; weight: 10-35 pounds, to 75 pounds

Distribution
Statewide

The eastern snapping turtle is a large aquatic turtle with a big, pointed head, long thick tail, and small lower shell. The upper shell is often covered with mud or algae. The upper part of the tail has large, pointy scales in a sawtooth row.

The eastern snapping turtle lives in a wide variety of aquatic habitats and when removed from those habitats, will vigorously defend itself. If you must move a large snapper, it is best to consult a wildlife professional. They have strong jaws and long necks. Grasping the turtle by the base of the tail (keeping it away from your legs) is safe, but can potentially injure the turtle's backbone.

LIFE CYCLE

Courtship and mating usually occurs in late spring and early summer, when water temperatures are warm. Females dig out bowl-shaped nests 3-8 inches deep in loose soil or sand and lay eggs from mid-May into June. Clutch sizes range from four to more than 100 eggs, with an average of about 25-45.

The eggs are leathery, cream colored, and about the same shape and size as a ping-pong ball. Hatching occurs 55-125 days after the eggs are laid, but on average, most eggs hatch between 75-95 days. These turtles generally have a lifespan of 40 years.

FOODS

Eastern snapping turtles help keep populations of many aquatic animals and plants in check. Up to 36 percent of a snapper's diet consist of plant material. Other items on the menu include insects, crayfish, fish, snails, earthworms, amphibians, snakes, small turtles, small mammals, birds, and even carrion.

HUMAN CONNECTIONS

The eastern snapping turtle is considered a game animal and is one of the few economically valuable reptile species in the state. Some people actively pursue this species for its meat, which is reported to make a fine stew and an excellent soup. Make sure you know the current regulations regarding their harvest.

Outdoor Calendar

❖ MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION ❖

FISHING

Black Bass

Impounded waters and non-Ozark streams:
Open all year

Most streams south of the Missouri River:

- ▶ Catch-and-Keep:
May 24, 2025–Feb. 28, 2026

Bullfrog, Green Frog

June 30 at sunset–Oct. 31, 2025

Nongame Fish Giggling

Impounded waters, sunrise to sunset:
Feb. 16–Sept. 14, 2025

Paddlefish

On the Mississippi River:
Sept. 15–Dec. 15, 2025

Trout Parks

State trout parks are open seven days a week
March 1 through Oct. 31.

Catch-and-Keep:
March 1–Oct. 31, 2025

Free MO Hunting and MO Fishing Apps

MO Hunting makes it easy to view permits, electronically notch them, and Telecheck your harvest. MO Fishing lets you view permits, find great places to fish, and ID your catch. Get both in Android or iPhone platforms at short.mdc.mo.gov/Zi2.



**Only hunters selected through a random drawing may participate in these hunting seasons.*

For complete information about seasons, limits, methods, and restrictions, consult the *Wildlife Code of Missouri* at short.mdc.mo.gov/Zib. Current hunting, trapping, and fishing regulation booklets are available from local permit vendors or online at short.mdc.mo.gov/ZZf.

HUNTING

Black Bear*

Oct. 18–31, 2025

Bullfrog, Green Frog

June 30 at sunset–Oct. 31, 2025

Coyote

Restrictions apply during April, spring turkey season, and firearms deer season.

Open all year

Crows

Nov. 1, 2025–March 3, 2026

Deer

Archery:

Sept. 15–Nov. 14, 2025

Nov. 26, 2025–Jan. 15, 2026

Firearms:

- ▶ Early Antlerless Portion (open areas only):
Oct. 10–12, 2025
- ▶ Early Youth Portion (ages 6–15):
Nov. 1–2, 2025
- ▶ November Portion:
Nov. 15–25, 2025
- ▶ CWD Portion (open areas only):
Nov. 26–30, 2025
- ▶ Late Youth Portion (ages 6–15):
Nov. 28–30, 2025
- ▶ Late Antlerless Portion (open areas only):
Dec. 6–14, 2025
- ▶ Alternative Methods Portion:
Dec. 27, 2025–Jan. 6, 2026

Doves

Sept. 1–Nov. 29, 2025

Elk*

Archery:

Oct. 18–26, 2025

Firearms:

Dec. 13–21, 2025

Groundhog (Woodchuck)

May 12–Dec. 15, 2025

Pheasant

Youth (ages 6–15):

Oct. 25–26, 2025

Regular:

Nov. 1, 2025–Jan. 15, 2026

Quail

Youth (ages 6–15):

Oct. 25–26, 2025

Regular:

Nov. 1, 2025–Jan. 15, 2026

Rabbits

Oct. 1, 2025–Feb. 15, 2026

Sora, Virginia Rail

Sept. 1–Nov. 9, 2025

Squirrels

May 24, 2025–Feb. 15, 2026

Teal

Sept. 13–21, 2025

Turkey

Fall:

- ▶ Archery:
Sept. 15–Nov. 14, 2025
Nov. 26, 2025–Jan. 15, 2026
- ▶ Firearms:
Oct. 1–31, 2025

Waterfowl

See the Migratory Bird and Waterfowl Hunting Digest or visit short.mdc.mo.gov/ZZx for more information.

Wilson's (Common) Snipe

Sept. 1–Dec. 16, 2025

Woodcock

Oct. 18–Dec. 1, 2025



ILLUSTRATION: MARK RATHIEL



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The beauty of nature can be quite grand — a sunset, a rainbow, or a field of wildflowers. But it can also be quite subtle, like this droplet of water, suspended on a stem of grass, perfectly reflecting the sky's setting sun. Get out there and enjoy the grand — and not so grand — moments in nature. What will you discover?

📷 by **David Stonner**

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